

Department of the Air Force Spark Tank Competition Procedures and Guidance

Campaign: Spark Tank 2023 (ST23), our 6th annual event, is open for submissions in the Guardians and Airmen Innovation Network (GAIN) platform (<https://gain.apps.dso.mil/daf/spark-tank-2023>) from 1 June to 17 August 2022. The Major Commands, Field Commands and Direct Reporting Unit (MAJ/FLDCOM/DRU) down selects, Wild Card Voting, Quarter-Finals, Semi-Finals, and Finals competitions should occur between 18 August 2022 and 8 March 2023. The link to the ST23 Teams channel is: (<https://dod.teams.microsoft.us/l/channel/19%3adod%3acad2f825dff402290d6a4b9c6d52137%40thread.tacv2/General?groupId=55c75a8a-5fc1-4dbf-a95c-01b8acae6a83&tenantId=8331b18d-2d87-48ef-a35f-ac8818ebf9b4>).

Eligibility: Members of the US Air Force and US Space Force (Enlisted, Officer, AF Reserve, Air National Guard, and Civilian employees) are eligible for the competition.

Limitations: Submissions shall not include classified material, uniform change requests, publications reviews, unoriginal ideas, or ideas that have already been implemented.

Levels of Competition:

- 1) MAJ/FLDCOM/DRU: The first step is an open call for each MAJ/FLDCOM/DRU to solicit innovative solutions from subordinate organizations. The Spark Tank production team established 17 pre-heat campaigns on the GAIN platform for each Command to manage their respective competition within the larger Spark Tank campaign. As part of managing the campaign, Commands may post command-specific interest areas or themes to focus submissions. Command pre-heat campaigns are open for submissions until 17 August 2022, 2100 EDT.
- 2) No later than 2100 EDT on 31 Oct 2022, Command moderators will designate up to two submissions at the completion of the command's internal review process for advancement into the "Quarter Finals" round based on either:
 - a. Pairwise Voting rank,
 - b. Scorecard Evaluation rank, or
 - c. Command-specific pitch competition to command leadership (e.g., PHOENIX SPARK)
- 3) Each MAJ/FLDCOM/DRU will evaluate all submissions within their respective pre-heat (see pre-heat evaluation criteria below). At the same time, each command will support Wild Card Voting using Pairwise and Token Voting. Use of these techniques enables Airmen and Guardians to vote for submissions within the pre-heat campaigns as follows:
 - a. WILD CARD VOTING ROUND 1 – PAIRWISE: All submissions will enter a round of Pairwise voting from 22 AUG - 16 SEP 2022 where Airmen and Guardians will receive 15 votes per pre-heat (maximum 255 votes per person).

The top four selections from each pre-heat campaign (68 maximum) will move to Wild Card Voting Round 2 - Token Voting.

- b. WILD CARD VOTING ROUND 2 - TOKEN VOTING: The top four concepts, as determined by Wild Card Voting Round 1 rankings, from each of the seventeen command pre-heat campaigns will consolidate and compete for token “investments” during this round, 19 SEP - 31 OCT 2022. Each Airman and Guardian will receive 25 tokens and can distribute between 1 and 5 tokens per submission. At the end of Round 2, the concepts with the highest total token investment, if not designated by a Command for advancement, will be advanced to a spot in the Quarter Finals to further compete with Command-designated “auto-bid” concepts for a maximum of forty quarterfinalists.
- 4) All submissions not advancing to the quarter finals will be migrated to the GAIN Open Call for further evaluation and possible support through the local chain of command.
- 5) Department of the Air Force (DAF) Headquarters Participation: Secretariat, and Air Staff, Functional 2-letter organizations and their FOAs will submit through the Air Force District of Washington (AFDW) pre-heat campaign. HQ Space Force staff and USSF L2 (2-letter organizations) and applicable FOAs will submit through the Space Force National Capital Region (SFNCR) pre-heat campaign.
- 6) Just Do It (JDI) Identification: Command pre-heat campaigns may determine a submission does not need DAF Executive support to become a reality and are more appropriately designated as “Just Do It” concepts during the evaluation phase. These will be advanced into a separate and independent JDI work stream where Lead Command functional SME will, in coordination with DAF HQ SME and program offices, work to advance the ideas if practical.
- 7) Quarter-Finals: A board comprised of innovation and functional subject matter experts, SAF/MG, and AFWERX personnel will select the best submissions and compile a final slate of Semi-Finalists for presentation to the Semi-Finals board. Quarter-Finals evaluation will occur on or about 12 NOV 22 with a results announcement on or around 18 NOV 22. A total of fifteen submissions will be advanced to the Semi-Finals Round. Non-selected submissions will be advanced to JDI or GAIN Open Call work streams for support.
- 8) Semi-Finals: The Semi-Finals board, co-chaired by VCSAF and VCSO and comprised of DAF Executive subject-matter experts, will select up to six (6) of the most innovative solutions by reviewing the submission video and submission form. The other nine solution submissions will be added to either the JDI or the Productable Project Holodeck Innovation Portfolio tracker work streams. Semi-Finals evaluation is scheduled on 7 DEC 22 with a results announcement on/before 6 JAN 23.

- 9) Finals: Up to six (6) submissions will be advanced to pitch their solutions to DAF leadership at the Spark Tank Finals planned to be held in conjunction with the Air and Space Forces Association's Warfare Symposium in Aurora, CO from 6-8 MAR 23.

Requirements:

1) Nomination Packages – must include:

- a. Completed Submission Template to help people understand the solution and why it's needed.
- b. An original video, no longer than 3-min, to summarize the solution and make the pitch. If selected as a finalist, videos may be used by Public Affairs (SAF/PA) for news articles. Videos are **NOT** required to be professionally created or produced; however, the video must be reviewed by a unit's responsible Public Affairs office to ensure suitability for public release prior to posting. The unit's public affairs team will review all videos and approve for public release and associate keyword tags for the videos using the DVIDS accessioning tags "AFINNOFET" and "SparkTank2023." PA will provide a link to DVIDS for the Spark Tank packages. To ensure proper association, the name of the video must be the same as the name of the submission in the GAIN platform.

NOTE: YouTube, Google drive video file paths or anything other than DVIDS are not accessible or DoD-net friendly and will not be used for the Quarter- or Semi-finals. Coordination for DVIDS support is vital to your submission's success in ST23.

NOTE: The video must be approved by the local PA office prior to submission. Once approved, the PA office will load the video onto DVIDS and provide a link to include on the GAIN platform.

- c. MAJ/FLDCOM/DRU may include additional instructions (e.g., preferred focus areas, PHOENIX SPARK participation guidelines).

2) Semi-Final Packages - In addition to the Nomination and Wild Card requirements above, concepts designated as semi-finalists must include:

- a. A public release statement addressed to SAF/PA, then signed and dated by individual nominees. The statement will read verbatim:

"I do or do not (circle one) agree to the use of Privacy Act information in the nomination narrative. This information may include Privacy Act information or Personally Identifiable Information (PII) found in DoD 5400.11-R, DoD Privacy Program, Disclosure of Personal Information to Other Agencies and Third Parties and guidance in Air Force Instruction 33-332, Air Force Privacy and Civil Liberties Program, Chapters 1, 2, and 6. I understand those transmitting personal information via email will exercise caution and adequately safeguard it in accordance with AFI 33-332, paragraph 2.5 and subparagraphs. The announcement message or any publicity regarding the award nomination will contain no privacy act information other than name, rank, and base of assignment."

- b. Intellectual Property forms 1981 and 1279 will be sent to semi-finalists for completion. Submit both to afmclo.jaz.patents@wpafb.af.mil and abby.boggs@us.af.mil with Cc: to crystal.ortiz@us.af.mil and the SAF/MG GAIN org box (saf.mg.gain@us.af.mil). AFMCLO may reach out to semi-finalists for clarification.
- c. Semi-Finalist nominations must each also have a recommendation letter signed by the Commander, Deputy Commander, or equivalent that must read (verbatim): "A review of each nominee's entire official personnel record was conducted on (date) and revealed no information that would bring discredit to the Department of the Air Force.
- d. If a Wild Card nomination is selected as a Semi-Finalist in the mid-November timeframe the Wing/Delta must submit a recommendation letter signed by the Wing/Delta Commander using the same verbiage as used in paragraph 1c.

NOTE: If adverse information (from any period) was found in the official record reviews conducted for the preceding two steps, commanders (or authorized designees) will state that the adverse information was specifically considered by the command prior to submitting the idea for the Spark Tank campaign and the command strongly supports the nominee(s) for the competition (list full name(s) and SSN(s))."

- e. All items in the semi-finalist nomination package are due NLT 30 Nov 22 to the SAF/MG GAIN org box (saf.mg.gain@us.af.mil) with Cc: to crystal.ortiz@us.af.mil.
- 3) Finalist Packages - The six (6) finalists will be selected based on which projects have the highest probability of delivering game-changing impact to the Air and/or Space Forces within six months to two years as determined by a panel of senior leaders. Specific criteria include: need for senior executive support, friendly disruption, adversary disruption, and inspiration/impact to others and the DAF Innovation Culture.

Recognition:

- 1) Innovator Awards: Non-monetary awards may be presented to innovators at various stages of the competition. Further guidance on award solicitation will come out at a later date. As in prior years, Spark Tank finalists will be given support to organize and hone their pitch presentations for the Finals.
- 2) Spark Tank Award: The six (6) finalists will receive one trophy per team and the unit who supported the "Best Pitch" winner will display the Spark Tank championship cup on behalf of the winner until unseated at a future competition. In addition, we plan for finalists to receive a SAF/MG-funded TDY to AFA AWS as well as a SAF/MG-funded TDY to a workshop where innovators will receive assistance refining the solution and building and perfecting their on-stage pitch prior to competition. Up to two (2) innovators per solution will receive funding for each TDY. Finalists and select semi-finalists may

receive funding and/or other resources to implement their projects in the fiscal year in which the competition occurs.

- 3) **GAIN Opportunities:** In addition to providing awards to Spark Tank winners, SAF/MG and AFWERX will coordinate to connect all remaining innovators with local innovation consultants to help refine the solutions and define a way-forward, connect innovators to those who are currently developing similar concepts, and to those who are able to adopt solutions identified on GAIN.

Other:

- 1) To support DAF Digital Transformation efforts, our culture must transition to access info at the source. This means, keep emails to a minimum, eradicate file attachments in emails by leveraging MS teams and the GAIN ST23 communications within the campaign platform.
- 2) For the latest info, join the Spark Tank 2023 MS Teams channel using the QR Code below.
 - a. The MS Teams channel is a public channel (max capacity: 25k).
 - b. Instructions on how to register for a DoD Platform One account are located in the General Channel Files tab.
- 3) All ST23 action guidance will be provided on the GAIN ST23 campaign page. Access to GAIN and the ST23 campaign require registering for a DoD Platform One account.

GUARDIANS AND AIRMEN
INNOVATION NETWORK

MS Team Channel QR Code:

SPARK TANK
2023
(CLICK HERE TO BEGIN)

Need support? CONTACT THE GAIN TEAM